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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the objectives for the writing programs for Department of Defense Office of Dependents Schools (DoDDS). Assessment results for 1978-79 writing samples of eighth and eleventh grade students are also presented, along with a summary of students' responses to questions about their writing habits. Test results reported in the paper show the following: (1) overall, students at the designated grades were writing longer essays and more complex sentences and were aware of the concept of a good paragraph; (2) the average number of words per essay for eighth grade students was 159 words, and the average for eleventh grade students was 225.6 words; (3) more than half of all the students stated that they wrote fewer than three times a week in their English classes, while 30% of the eleventh-grade students and 21% of the eighth-grade students reported that they wrote less than once a week in English classes; (4) coherence of ideas was judged high for both grade levels (the only problem determined from the 1979 testing was that eighth-grade students needed more work on sentence flexibility); and (5) the use of writing mechanics was good, but 46% of the sentences were simple sentences. (HOD)

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Session Title: A Competency Overview: From Coast to Coast (JH/MS-S)

Speech Topic: Assessment Results for Student Writing Samples

Family units of military service personnel and Department of Defense civilian employees can be assured that their children's formal elementary and secondary education will not suffer when the family is authorized to accompany the sponsor on an overseas assignment. DoD has established an elementary and secondary school system overseas which receives direct funding, manpower, and curriculum support from an office of the Secretary of Defense field activity titled "Department of Defense Dependents Schools" or (DoDDS).

The DoD Dependents Schools system is comprised of 274 schools at 160 different locations in 25 countries around the world. Currently, about 150,000 military dependents are receiving kindergarten through 12th - grade education under the DoDDS system. All high schools in DoDDS are accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). Some junior high schools are presently accredited by

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the NCA, and others are in the process of attaining accreditation. Recently, NCA broadened its accreditation policies to include elementary schools, and many DoD elementary schools will be accredited in the near future. Young men and women who graduate from DoD high schools experience no difficulty in having their credits accepted by colleges and universities in the United States. More than 8,000 American teachers and other professional personnel staff classrooms and schools that in all ways compare with American public schools.

(Viewgraph 1)

The viewgraph shows the organization of the school system into six regions with a headquarters office in Alexandria, Virginia. The six regional offices are located in Mainz-Kastel, Germany, Karlsruhe, Germany; London, England; Madrid, Spain; Quarry Heights, Panama; and Okinawa, Japan.

The curriculum, including English and language arts, social studies, and vocational education programs to name a few, offered in the dependent's schools overseas is patterned on better educational practices in stateside schools. The programs are reviewed periodically to keep instruction pertinent and timely to student needs. The second "Five Year Curriculum Development Plan", dated September 1979, describes the structure and coordination of the curriculum review process. The

success of the curriculum development plan can be traced directly to the involvement of educators at all levels of our school system.

The curriculum model calls for participation of teachers, parents, and students, as well as above - school - level personnel.

(Viewgraph 2)

The viewgraph shows the systemwide components for each subject area. The instructional categories are as follows:

(a) Developing objectives

(b) Selecting instructional materials

(c) Determining instructional alternatives and teacher methods which would lead to in-service training programs, and

(d) Evaluation

I plan to discuss the objectives for writing programs for the overseas schools and the evaluation activities and test results from the student writing samples. Dr. Joan Gibbons will elaborate on this and discuss program changes based on the writing test results.

Clear and concise objectives serve a number of purposes. Their primary function is to indicate the student performance that is [redacted] desired as a result

of instruction. Their careful formulation permits greater precision in the selection of educational materials, learning experiences, and appropriate assessment devices. They provide direction for school staffs and clearly convey instructional intent to students. The objectives for the writing program are the foundation for the writing curriculum.

The general objectives for writing were prepared with specific guidelines outlined in the "Five Year Curriculum Development Plan" to ensure adequate communication.

(Viewgraph 3)

Five purposes of our school system have been identified. These 5 purposes are more specifically defined in terms of 10 goals.

Purpose	Goals
Personal Competency	Mental Health Physical Health Aesthetics
Social Competency	Ethics Social Interaction
Vocational Competency	Career Education
Environmental Competency	Manmade Environments Natural Environments
Learning Competency	Basic Skills Learning Skills

The objectives for the writing program meet the standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs which were developed by a committee of the National Council of Teachers of English. Parents and community groups, teachers from subject areas other than English and administrators and students reviewed the objectives for the writing program and made comments about necessary changes. You will notice that the program objective of, "The learner should write for a variety of purposes," uses one of the standards mentioned by the

NCTE committee as necessary for an effective basic skills program in writing. The instructional objectives are written for grade levels of kindergarten through 4, grade 5 through 8, and grades 9 through 12.

(Viewgraph 4 and 5)

There is one overall program objective for writing, then the instructional objectives which are more specific, then the enabling or enroute objectives. Each school prepares course or unit of study objectives which are more specific then the objectives shown here.

Textbooks are reviewed on the basis of how well they meet the program and instructional objectives. Task groups use checklists and rating scales to determine how well textbooks for English conform to the writing objectives. Tests and test items for students are also selected on the basis of how well they evaluate the objectives. All of you know that a direct measure of writing gives a more comprehensive picture of how well the student is performing.

For the last two years, the overseas dependents schools has been using the direct writing assessment from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. These viewgraphs show the test results for the 8th and 11th grade students on a writing sample test.

(Viewgraph 6 and 7)

In the spring of 1978 and in 1979 several thousand overseas dependent school eighth grade and eleventh grade students wrote compositions for evaluation which were part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress testing. The students also answered a set of interesting questions about their writing habits.

In answering the survey questions, over half the eighth-graders and eleventh-graders stated that they wrote less than three times in a week in their English classes, while 30% of the eleventh-graders and 21% of the eighth-graders reported that they wrote less than once a week in their English classes. However, 60% of the eleventh-graders and 51% of the eighth-graders said that they spent in excess of two hours per week writing for classes other than English classes. Most of the students reported that they feel positive about their writing abilities and virtually all of them engage in some form of recreational writing in their time away from school.

The test results shown are for the spring of 1978. The 1979 test results are in draft form but show that, overall, students at grades 8 and 11 are writing longer essays, more complex sentences and are aware of the concept of a good paragraph than their counterparts in schools in the continental United States (CONUS). The eighth graders are writing about two paragraphs per essay whereas the eleventh graders are writing about 3 paragraphs in response to a writing assignment. The average number of words per essay for 8th graders is 159 words and 225.6 words for 11th graders.

The average number of sentences per essay for 8th graders is 10.7 sentences whereas it is 14.4 sentences per essay for 11th graders. All of these figures are above the United States school system test results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The 1979 test results are very similar with slight improvement. The difference between the 8th and 11th graders show that the 11th graders are writing a great deal more than the 8th graders. The sentence errors for the mechanics of writing for 8th graders and 11th graders is minimal. Spelling errors for 8th graders show that an average of 5.7 errors, or rounded off, 6 errors, were made. This amounts to about 5% of the number of words written. The 11th graders made 5.7 spelling errors per essay which is about 3% of the words written in the essay. The 11th graders seem to be handling sentences better and they have a knowledge of various sentence types. There were very few word choice errors or agreement errors for both grades for 1978 and 1979. In 1979, the average number of words per sentence for 11th graders is 16.4 words or rounded off is 16 words per sentence. The 8th graders wrote 15.9 words per sentence or rounded off is 16 words per sentence. Sixteen words per sentence is a fairly long sentence. At the 11th grade students are writing more complex sentences with clauses.

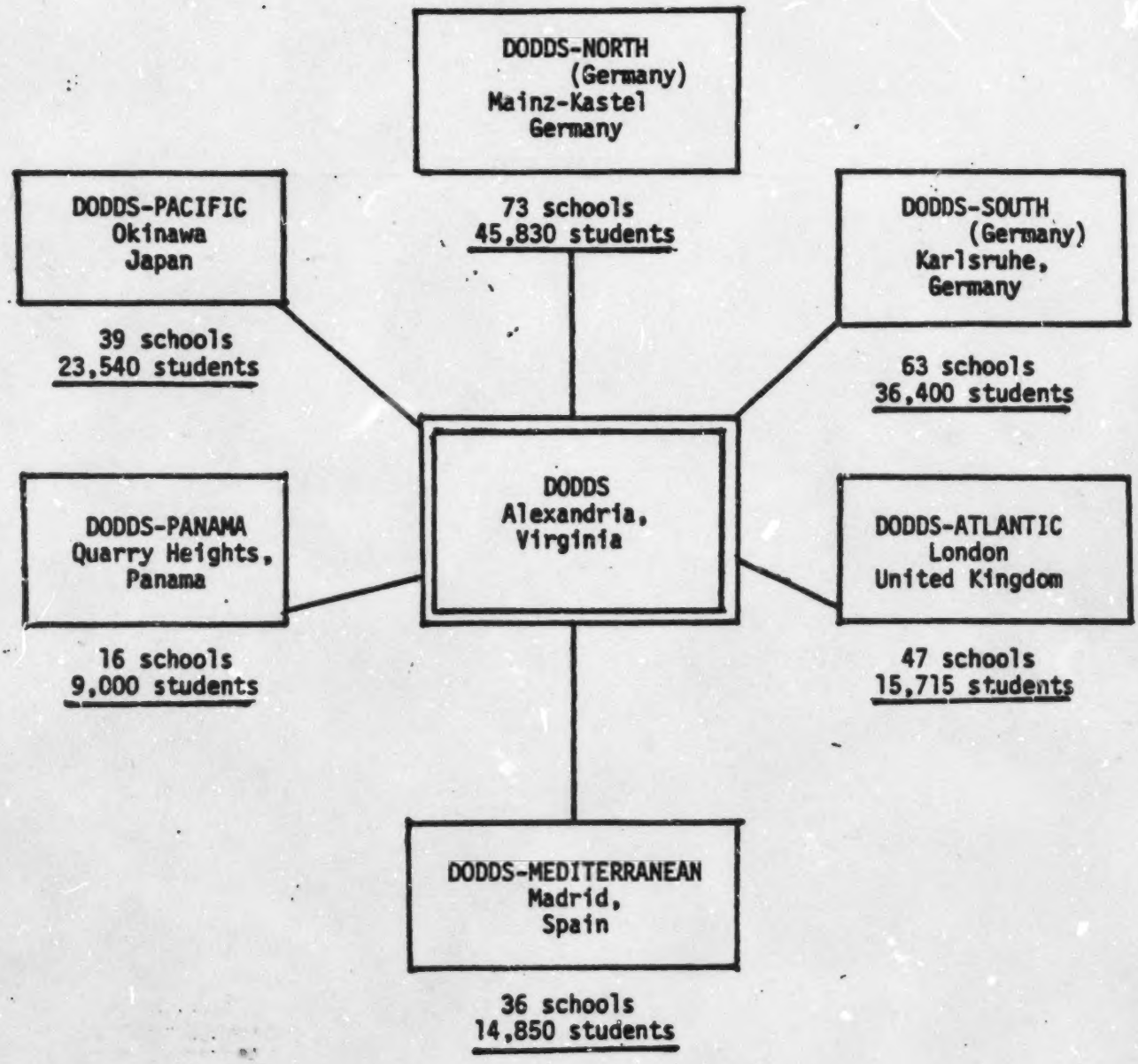
Coherence of ideas is high for both grade levels. This was judged by the absence of awkward sentences or confused or dangling modifiers. The only problem found from the 1979 testing at this point is that the 8th graders need more work on sentence flexibility. They are experimenting

with complex sentences. The mechanics are good but 46% of the sentences were simple sentences. They need assistance with combining ideas and embedding.

In summary, these test results show that the students in the overseas dependents schools have the essential writing skills needed for competent writing for many different purposes. Thank you.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

(Subsequent to 1979 Reorganization)



#1

SYSTEMWIDE COMPONENTS

- Objectives (for learners, grades K-12)
- Instructional Materials
- Teaching Methods
- Inservice Training
- Evaluation

(#2)

CODES USED WITH OBJECTIVES:

DoDDS Categories:

- Personal Competency (PC)
- Social Competency (SC)
- Vocational Competency (VC)
- Environmental Competency (EC)
- Learning Competency (LC)

Kinds of Behavior:

(a) Knowledge
(b) Intellectual Processes
(c) Attitudes and Values
(d) Motor Skills

WRITING

4. The learner should write for a variety of purposes.

K-4	5-8	9-12
4.1 The learner should identify the audience and the purpose for writing.		
4.1.1 The learner should write brief impressions to family, to friends, and to people in the community.	4.1.2 The learner should in his/her writing distinguish between audience: oneself, peers, and others distant in time and space.	4.1.3 The learner should use problems, statements, analyses, and cause/effect relationship situations as themes for composition.
4.2 The learner should develop self-knowledge through introspective writing.		
4.2.1 The learner should write three sentences, narrating in chronological sequence a personal experience.	4.2.2 The learner should write a paragraph narrating a personal experience connecting and clarifying the sequence with transitional words.	4.2.3 The learner should write a dramatized narrative of a personal experience.
4.3 The learner should select from among a variety of styles, syntactic structures, sentence patterns, usages, and other strategies to accomplish a purpose.		
4.3.1 The learner should select from a variety of sentence forms to accomplish his/her purpose in writing.	4.3.2 The learner should select from among a variety of styles, syntactic sentences usages, and sentence patterns those sentence & paragraph patterns which will enable him/her to accomplish his/her purpose.	4.3.3 The learner should select from among a variety of styles, syntactic structures, usages, sentence patterns, & paragraph forms those sentence, paragraph, & ultimately, theme forms which will enable him/her to accomplish his/her purpose in writing.

(#4)

K-4		5-8		9-12	
4.4 The learner should compose a variety of forms.					
4.4.1	The learner should write sentences and paragraphs in variation.	4.4.2	The learner should write sentences and paragraphs in variation and description.	4.4.3	The learner should write sentences and paragraphs in narration, description, and exposition.
4.5 The learner should write standard English with consistent spelling, punctuation, capitalization and usage.					
4.5.1	The learner should recognize the appropriate conventions in writing: punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, and handwriting.	4.5.2	The learner should recognize the need to compensate through syntax, structure, and mechanics in writing for stress, juncture, pitch, and non-verbal behavior.	4.5.3	The learner should write standard English with correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization and usage consistent with his/her language experience.
4.6 The learner should write to communicate in a vocational situation.					
4.6.1	The learner should write letters to obtain information about careers	4.6.2	The learner should write business letters with established and appropriate conventions in writing: punctuation, capitalization, spelling, usage, handwriting, manuscript or type form.	4.6.3	The learner should write vocational applications and resumes.
4.7 The learner should choose writing as a means of expression.					
4.7.1	The learner should choose to write to communicate with friends and family.	4.7.2	The learner should choose to write in a variety of literary forms to express his/her ideas and emotions.	4.7.3	The learner should choose to write in a variety of literary forms to universalize his/her ideas and emotions.

Table 1. Error Count for Eighth and Eleventh Grade Essays

	Average Number of Words Per Essay		Average Number of Sentences Per Essay	
	8th	11th	8th	11th
DoDDS	159.0	225.6	10.72	14.40
National Assessment	128.5	137.2	9.00	9.40

Mechanics: Word Errors

	Average Number of Words Per Essay		Average Number of Errors Per 100 Words	
	8th	11th	8th	11th
Spelling:				
DoDDS	5.7	5.7	3.6	2.5
National Assessment	5.3	3.4	2.6	3.0
Word Choice:				
DoDDS	0.7	1.1	0.4	0.5
National Assessment	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.6
Capitalization:				
DoDDS	1.2	0.6	0.8	0.3
National Assessment	*	*	*	*

Mechanics: Sentence Errors

Punctuation:				
DoDDS	2.2	3.4	2.1	2.4
National Assessment	3.0	*	3.2	*
Agreement:				
DoDDS	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.6
National Assessment	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.6

Table 1. Error Count for Eighth and Eleventh Grade Essays (Cont'd)

	Average Number of Sentences Per Essay	
	8th	11th
Mechanics: Sentence Errors		
Run-on:		
DoDDS	1.1	0.6
National Assessment	1.1	0.6
Awkward:		
DoDDS	2.4	2.7
National Assessment	*	*
End Marks:		
DoDDS	0.4	0.3
National Assessment	*	*

*Not available. The National Assessment scoring criteria did not include this data category.

Table 2. Range of Pupil Performance (Percentages of students by performance level)

Errors Per 100 Words	Spelling		Usage		Capitalization	
	8th	11th	8th	11th	8th	11th
0 or 1 errors per 100 words	29.5	38.5	93.5	95.0	80.0	95.5
2 or 3 errors per 100 words	28.0	35.0	6.0	5.0	14.5	3.5
4 or more errors per 100 words	42.5	14.0	.5	*	4.5	1.0

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